"The bare minimum should be that [parents] understand that race matters."
Culture Training for Transracial Families Through Adoption

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Table of Contents

Definitions

Transracial Adoption: the adoption of a child of one race by a parent or parents of a different race than that of the child. (Baden, Pg. 387, 2012)

Enculturation: "…the lifelong development of awareness and understanding of one's birth culture, including an individual's feelings of pride toward his or her birth culture, participation in cultural activities and events, and identification with the birth culture." (Baden Pg. 389, 2012)

Reculturation: "…a process of identity development and navigation through which adoptees develop their relationship to their birth and adoptive cultures via reculturative activities and experiences." (Baden Pg. 390, 2012)

Reculturative Activities: "…refer to behaviors, traditions, attitudes, or beliefs that promote adoptees' attempts to regain cultural knowledge, awareness, skill, or experience and can include education, language courses, heritage tours, study-abroad experiences, and interactions with birth culture or hyphenated-American ethnic communities" (Baden Pg. 390, 2012)

Reclaim: when adoptees fully immerse themselves within their birth or native culture (Baden, 2012)

Acculturation: "…refers to a process of change that occurs internally when an immigrant comes into direct contact with members of a host culture." (Baden, Pg. 388, 2012)

Assimilation: "…the full adoption of the host culture or the adoptive culture that occurs when adoptees fully embrace the adoptive culture…" (Baden, Pg. 391, 2012).

Color Blind: "not influenced by difference of race" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Racial Mirror: "…people of the same ethnicity as you; they would serve as a 'mirror' into what it's like to not only be a part of that ethnic group but hopefully also serve as a mentor to help understand how to relate to the ethnic community at large." (Adoption.org)

Introduction

Transracial adoptions occur when parent(s) adopt a child of a different race to become permanent members of their families (Child Welfare Information Gateway). Between 1999 and 2011, approximately 233,934 adoptions occurred worldwide (Infographics Mania, 2013), representing a 50% increase in transracial adoptions from previously recorded years (Institute of Family Studies, n.d.). In the United States, adoptions are further categorized as international or domestic.

International Transracial Adoptions in the United States

Watson and Hegar (2014) name the second World War as a major reason for the growth of international adoptions in the United States. While soldiers and other military personnel were placed abroad, they took in children that were facing disease, famine and loss of family members. After 1945, religious organizations began to help these international children find homes within American families. Due to the overwhelming responsibilities of finding homes for children, new licensed organizations were founded for the sole purpose of connecting international children to American families (Watson and Hegar, 2014). Today, these licensed organizations are better known as adoption agencies.

In 2018, there were over 4,000 inter-country adoptions in the United States, with China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine, and South Korea among the most common countries of birth (US Department of State, 2019; Adoption, 2017). International adoptions can be complex because they often involve strict laws and policies from birth and adoptive countries. The U.S. federal adoption laws for example, look at citizenship status, marital status, criminal background, as well as a home study. Depending on the children's country of origin, adoptive parents may be required to visit the child's birth country for an extended period of time before

being allowed to adopt the child. During these required visits, parents have the added benefit of experiencing their adopted child's birth culture. (Childwellfare.gov, 2014). Travel requirements vary by country, with some requiring extended stays (Childwellfare.gov, 2014).

The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children was established for the purpose of protecting and ensuring the best care for all parties involved in international adoptions (Childwellfare.gov, 2014). However, not all international adoptions are governed by the Hague convention. Orphan adoptions, also known as non-Hague adoptions, occur when birth parents are deceased or are separated from the child. There are some differences between Hague and non-Hague adoptions. In Hague adoptions, the adoption service provider must be licensed in the United States and accredited by a Department of State's designated Accrediting Entities. Non-Hague adoptions only require agencies to be licensed in the United States. Hague adoptions must include language about policies, fees, history and relationships with in-country providers within the adoption services contract while non-Hague may or may not include all the listed information in the contract (adoptioncouncil.org).

Domestic Transracial Adoptions in the United States

Palmiste (2011) describes a large movement that gave meaning to domestic transracial adoptions. From 1959 to 1967, the Indian Adoption Project allowed Native children to be adopted into white families in order to have a better life (Palmiste, 2011). There were three entities involved in the process; (1) The United States Children's Bureau, (2) The Bureau of Indian Affairs, and (3) The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). The Child Welfare League of America ran the program, the United States Children's Bureau planned the adoptions, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs managed the finances of the project (Palmiste, 2011). The need to remove Native children from poor living conditions on reservations was one of the reasons

that the project began. Native parents were accused of leaving their children unattended, children were living in huts, and health concerns were plentiful amongst people living on reservations (Palmiste, 2011). An estimated 12,486 Native children were adopted over the course of the project, but over time, there began a resistance from Native communities who began to speak out about the project and how it was hurting their children. In response, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was enacted in 1978, "…to protect the best interest of Indian Children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families…" (U.S. Department of the Interior Indian Affairs).

Today, domestic adoptions can occur within the same family, town, state, or country, with an estimated 135,000 adoptions each year in the United States (Adoption Network, n.d.). There are different ways in which a family can domestically adopt; adoption agency and foster care. Adoption agencies can be domestic or international, but when working as a domestic agency, workers will pair an infant or young child with a couple. Foster to adopt entails potential parents housing an infant or young child until they decide if they wish to adopt that child.

Transracial adoptions have increased by 50% between 1999 and 2011 (Institute of Family Studies n.d.).

In 2007, Hellerstedt et. al, conducted a population-based study to quantify American parents who adopted children from other countries. Of the 2,977 parents sampled, 88% (n) were transracial adoptions (Hellerstedt et. al, 2007). The Institute of Family Studies also found that while 77% of adoptive mothers of kindergarten children identified as white, 39% of the children were white, 23% identified as Hispanic, 17% identified as Asian, 11% identified as multiracial, and 9% identified as Black (Institute of Family Studies, n.d.). These demographics indicate that a significant proportion of adoptive mothers are raising children of a different race. According to

the Department of Health and Human Services, 28% of foster care adoptions are considered transracial and 21% of adoptions from agencies are transracial (Race, Ethnicity, and Gender, 2017).

For many, international adoptions in particular are seen as a form of social justice. In that (a) adoptive parents choose to take in children in need rather than adopting children domestically who have a higher chance of a healthy life (b) international adoptions help solve poverty and institutionalization concerns for some children and (c) international adoption provides traumatized children a safe space to develop (Hollingsworth, 2003).

Others view international adoptions negatively. Bartholet (2006) describes international adoption as "Stranger Adoption", as compared to "Relative Adoption" which means children are adopted into a family of their same race and ethnicity (Bartholet, 2006). Opponents of non-relative adoptions argue that parents who adopt internationally are typically white counterparts from a developed country and the children they seek to adopt are those of children from developing countries who do not have the basic necessities of a developed country (Bartholet, 2006). The National Association of Black Social Workers would agree with Bartholet that transracial adoption should come to an end but would argue for a different reason. In 1972, when it was becoming more typical for a black child to be placed with a white family, the NABSW shared their opinion. In a formal statement, the black social workers believed that there will be a loss of culture and identity for the individuals and for the race as a whole; in fact, it was a form of cultural genocide (NABSW, n.d.).

Whether international or domestic, racial differences between parents and children have led to social and political controversies in the recent past. There are books, newspaper articles, social media groups and webpages dedicated to the idea that children should be adopted by

parents of the same race. The Facebook group "ANTI-ADOPTION" creates conversations and shares content based on the idea that transracial adoptions create trauma for adopted children (https://www.facebook.com/groups/2202838099986293/). In YES! Magazine, writer JS Lee who identifies as Korean, writes about her negative experiences as having been transracially adopted (YES! Magazine, 2019). Lee wrote that although she loves her adoptive family, she was never given an opportunity to form an identify as a woman of Korean descent because her family surrounded her with white people, a white community, and the white culture. Lee's account of her negative experiences, along with the conversation generated, is the motivation that the current study: Culture Training for Transracial Families Through Adoption. The overall goal was to understand cultural identity formation among youth who are adopted into a family of a different race.

This study is motivated to understand what is best for those who are adopted into a family of a different race and how adoptive parents come to decide to adopt a child of a different race. The purpose of this study is to examine how adoptive parents raise children of different races, with a focus on cultural identity.

Literature Review

Baden (2012) describes the process through which adopted youth reconcile birth and adoptive cultures to develop their own cultural identities as r*eculturation*. Baden explains that at a young age, adoptees begin to notice racial differences between them and their adoptive parents with respect to their physical appearance. Once adoptees are older, and have a vast knowledge of culture and race, there is often renewed interest in their adoptive and birth culture through cultural classes, language classes, dance classes, and other related activities associated with the

adoptee's birth culture. Baden et al, explain that this reintroduction to the birth culture or *reculturation* is important to many as it helps with their identity formation. Understanding their birth culture can guide adoptee's own sense of values, beliefs, and attitudes. In addition, Baden had discovered that about two thirds of adoptees identify with the culture their adoptive parents identify with. With this said, reculturation may not be applicable for all transracial adoptees. However, it is unknown how the parents' knowledge and lack of knowledge may help or hinder reculturation in the adoptee.

It is important to understand the differences in demographics of parents and adopted children because it can affect the development and well-being of children. When parents surround their adopted child in a white community and with little to no cultural socialization with the child's birth culture, the child can begin to lose their identity. Similar to any individual, children want to feel included in a community; therefore, when a child only being exposed to one race and culture, they will begin to associate with that race or culture; even if this means suppressing their own culture. In contrast, when parents have been able to socialize their child within their birth culture, the child can feel a better sense of identity. Although this may be true, some parents are not educated about the importance of including culture in the adoptee's life. This lack of knowledge may be the reason for some adoptees to feel a loss of identity.

There have been several studies that look at the cultural development of youth adoptees. In a study examining the effect of parent support on cultural socialization and development of ethnic identity in young adoptee children, Ferrari and colleagues found that both of the adoptee populations, American adoptees and Italian Adoptees, had encountered discrimination because of their racial and ethnic identities, and because of the fact that they had been adopted. (Ferrari et. al, 2017). This study concludes that parental comfort with their children's involvement in ethnic

discussions and activities generally encourage a positive attitude and heightens the adoptee's identification with their own birth culture (Ferrari et. al, 2017). Ferrari et. al. shed light into what young adoptees may feel and belief about their adoption; with this information, this study can compare these feelings with adult adoptees.

Mohanty et.al (2006) showed a positive relationship between cultural socialization and self-esteem. Among adults who were adopted internationally, continuous involvement in cultural activities was associated with higher of self-esteem (Mohanty et. al, 2006). A sense of belongingness was identified as a mediator between in the positive relationship. The researchers stress the importance of adoptive parents continually integrating cultural activities throughout children's development.

Juffer and Ijzendoorn (2007) compared characteristics between transracial adoptees and same-race adoptees. Overall, transracial adoptees identified with a different race or ethnicity than their adoptive parents while same-race adoptees identified with the same race or ethnicity as their adoptive parents. In their findings, the two populations did not differ in self-esteems (Juffer and Ijzendoorn, 2007). The authors argue that these findings may be explained by overcoming early difficulties. Typically, adopted parents tell their child that they were adopted at a young age. Therefore, the child has time to ask questions and talk with the parents about the adoption; with these conversations, tools to can be learned on how to understand concepts. When a child is taught how to overcome adversities at a young age, they will be more likely to have typical and even higher self-esteem levels at an older age (Juffer and Ijzendoorn, 2007).

One study explored ways to help adoptive parents feel more confident about raising children with different race and ethnicities. Using in-depth interviews, Brown and Calder (2000) explored the needs of foster parents when welcoming a child of a different race or ethnicity.

They highlight understanding of birth culture, training, community service, agency support, open discussions and self-awareness in order to gain confidence when welcoming a child of different race or ethnicity. Lastly, a handful of studies have examined identity formation and well-being of transracial adoptees; however, questions remain about how transracial adoptees themselves feel about the process of reculturation, the effects of cultural integration during childhood and difficulties or opportunities that arise due to adoptive parents' own knowledge and understanding on birth culture.

The specific objectives of this study are to (1) Discuss varying definitions of culture and how it impacts transracial adoptive families, (2) Discuss how parents and adoptees approach conversations around culture, ethnicity, and race and how these discussions impact relationship between the parent(s) and their adopted children, (3) Identify components of culture trainings that are useful/not useful , (4) Provide an opportunity for adoptive parents and youth who were transracially adopted to express any other concerns that were not covered in the previous objectives.

Methods

Research Design

Because this study examines the personal narratives of individuals involved in transracial adoptions, we used a qualitative research design that included semi-structured focus groups and one-on-one interviews. It is appropriate to use a qualitative research design because 1) we are interested in the personal experiences of adoptive parents and transracially adopted youth and 2) there is little research that examine the experience of transracial adoptions from the perspective youth and parents in transracial families.

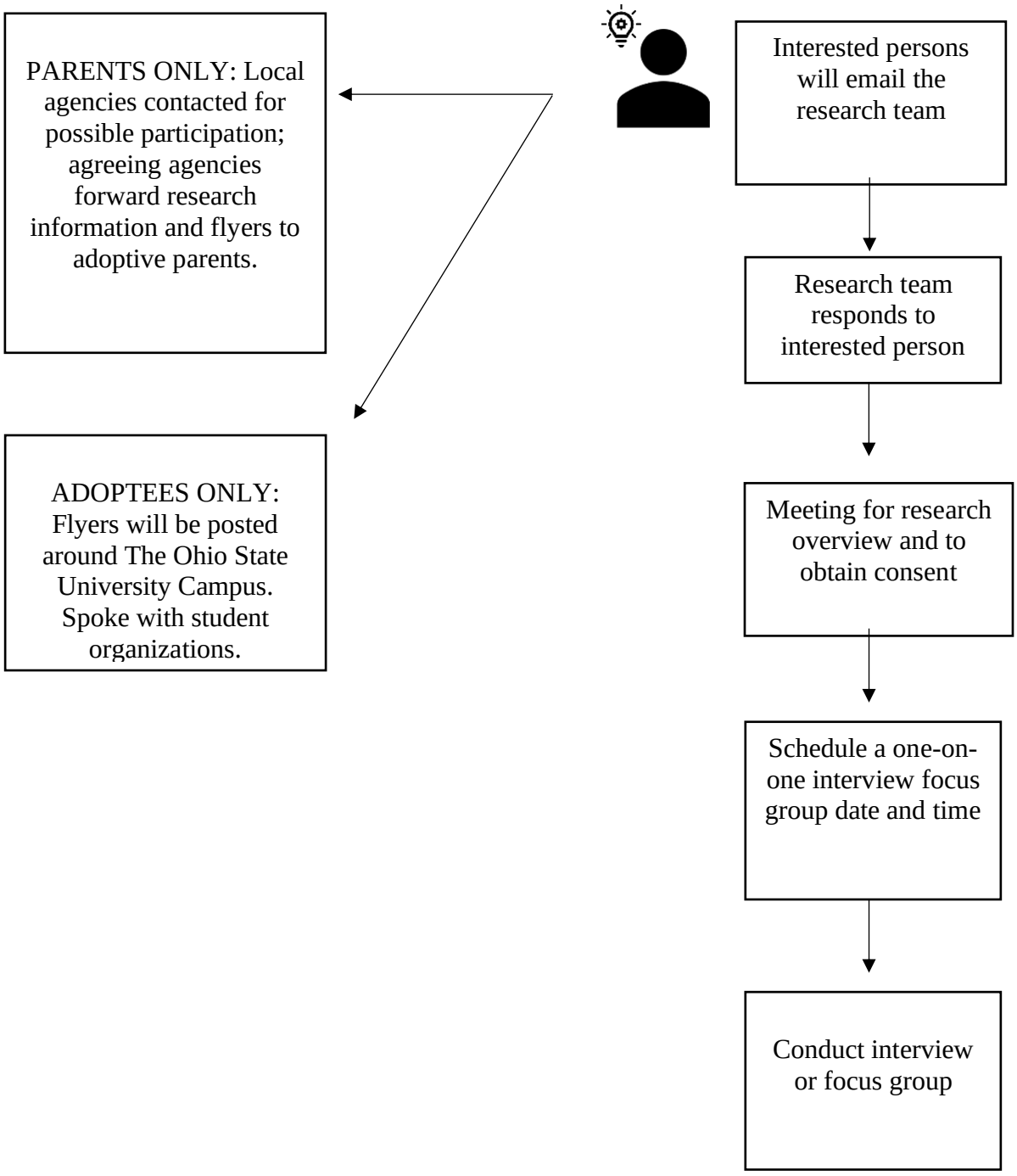
Eligibility and Recruitment

Youth age 18 and over who were adopted by one or two parents of a different race and parents who adopted a child of a different race were eligible to participate in the study. This study used a non-probability purposive sampling approach that selects participants (Figure 1). Transracially adopted youth were recruited by posting flyers around the Ohio State University (OSU) – Columbus campus. The flyers were displayed in public places on OSU campus including libraries, classroom buildings, the gyms, the union, and the multicultural center. In addition, the research team made presentations to Transracial Adoptees of Ohio State (TAO), a student organization that is made up of college students who were transracially adopted. After obtaining permission from the executive board members, the TAO executive board members forwarded the information about the study, as well as the requirements, to their members via student email. Adoptive parents were recruited by distributing flyers through email to local adoption agencies in the Columbus area. Agencies were encouraged to forward emails and/or share printed copies of the study flyer with potentially eligible parents. For both youth and adoptive parents, we also used a snowballing approach by encouraging participants to share study information with others who may eligible for the study.

All potential participants contacted the research team via email to show their interest in participating. The research team responded via email to set up a time and date to obtain consent, answer any and complete a focus group, an in-person one-on-one interview or a one-on-one interview via video conferencing. For the video conferencing option, the research team obtained consent via email ahead of the call.

The overall case flow is detailed in Figure 1.

Recruitment – Flow Chart



Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected from January 27th, 2020 to March 3rd, 2020. At the beginning of focus group or in-person interviews, the research staff administered a questionnaire to collect demographic information about the participant. For video conference participants, the research staff asked the participant to select a preferred method of communication; FaceTime, Facebook Video, Skype, Carmen Zoom and more. Once the medium has been chosen, the research team sent an invite to the video conference as well as a copy of the demographic questionnaire. During the focus groups and the one-on-one interviews, data were collected with the use of a voice recorder. All participants were asked the same questions regardless of the method of interview they selected (Questions asked to Parents are listed in Appendix A and Questions asked to Adoptees are listed in Appendix B). A semi- structured approach was used to elicit participant's opinions about how parents and adoptees approach conversations around culture, ethnicity/race, how these discussions impact relationship between youth and parents, as well as strategies they found helpful or no helpful. Participants were offered a $5 gift card for completing the study. All audio recordings, questionnaires and consent forms were stored in a password secured folder in BuckeyeBOX.

Participant and Research Team Expectations

When participants choose to cooperate in this study, there are some events to expect. All participants are expected to respond to confirm their availability with the research team as well as appear to the interview or focus group at the designated date, time, and location. Likewise, if a participant does not wish to continue with the interview or focus group, they are expected to communicate this with the research team. The research team is expected to respond to all participants and answer any questions that they have.

Once a time and date have been determined, the research team will give an address, directions and parking options to the participants. At the time of the interview or focus group, the research manager will familiarize the participants with the layout of the building (i.e. location of bathrooms) and a brief description of when the meeting will begin. If the participants have children with them, the research manager will guide the parents and children to a room next to the room in which the focus group will take place in. The children that came with the parents, may familiarize themselves with the babysitter. As more participants show up for the focus group, the waiting participants may help themselves to some snacks and beverages. Once all of the participants have showed up or it is five minutes past the said start time, the research manager may begin to gather the participants into their seats. For interviews, the researcher will begin the interview process when the participant has arrived. If the participant for an interview does not show up nor does the researcher hear from the participant half an hour past the schedule time, the researcher may mark the participant absent and end the interview. Any participant that does not show up to an interview or focus group will receive a follow up email.

When it is time for the video conference interview, the participant should expect a call from the research team through the agreed media. If the participant does not answer the first call, the researcher will call the participant two more times. If the participant does not pick up the video call, they will be marked “No Show” and the research team will send a follow up email with the participant. The follow up email will inform the participant of the “No Show” and will ask if the participant wants to reschedule or drop out of the study.

During the focus group, participants are expected to be respectful towards the other participants by listening to what they have to share, to use appropriate language when speaking with each other and the research manager, and other things a like. The participants will be

expected to participate by sharing their experiences or thoughts and to be actively listening to others. If the participant needs to be excused, for the purpose of using the restroom or simply needs some time away from the interview, they may do so by telling the research manager that they will be needing a break. The participants will be allowed a total time of a 10-minute break. A participant must be present for the focus group but is allowed to step outside the room (to use the restroom, the stretch, etc.) for a maximum of 10 minutes. If a participant is able to stay for the focus group and does not miss more than the eluded 10 minutes, then they will be rewarded a $5 gift card. If the participant is able to follow the expectations of the one-on-one interview, has conversed their experiences and thoughts with the research manager, and has taken breaks that less than or equal to 10 minutes, then the participant will be rewarded with a $5 gift card.

Any participant that does not follow these rules will get one warning from the research manager, and if the problem continues, the research managers will have the ability to ask the participant to leave. If a participant leaves due to inappropriate behavior, anything that they have said will not be used in the research.

Data Analysis

Attendance

During the time in which the research was looking for potential participants, a contact log was created. On the log, the researcher kept information about who the team had contacted via email. In regard to adoptee participants, the researcher hung flyers where it was necessary as well as where it was approved. The flyers displayed the study name, the requirements of participants, and the contact information of one of the members of the research team (Figure. 2). The flyers were hung up in public places on the Ohio State University – Columbus campus such as libraries, classroom buildings, the gyms, the union, and the multicultural center. Anyone who

say the flyers in these places contacted the listed research team to express their interest. The research team logged when the participant emails the team and the time of the team's response on the contact log sheet. The research team contacted a student organization called Transracial Adoptees of Ohio State, or TAO. TAO responded to the team to set up a meeting in order to go over the details of the study and how the organization would be involved. The research team logged the information of communication. If any of the interested participants agreed to the study, a meeting time was scheduled; the meeting date and time was then logged on the contact sheet. If the participant showed to the meeting, the research team marked the participant with a green color to indicate that they had fulfilled the duties of a study participant. If the participant did not show to the agreed meeting time, the participant was contacted by the team in order to see if the participant wishes to continue with the study. The team would send a total of three emails before marking the participant in a red color to indicate that they did not fulfill their duties as a study participant.

The parent participants have a similar log process. Flyers were distributed through email to local adoption agencies in the Columbus region. Flyers were similar to the flyers posted for adoptees but listed the specific requirements of a parent participant (Figure. 3). The agencies then indicated if they would send it out to their clients. Clients would then express their interest to the research team. Their contact with the team was recorded on the contact sheet under a separate section from the adoptee participants.

Sign-In Survey

All participants were required to complete a sign-in survey. The survey collected non-identifying information about the participant; age, race, race of child (if a parent participant),

race of parents (if an adoptee participant), year of adoption, and type of adoption (Figure. 4). The purpose of this survey if to identify the types of people the study talked with.

The information collected from the survey was organized into a sheet. Each entity had a column (x-axis) and the participants were listed in rows (y-axis). The participants were given identification numbers and the identification numbers were used in this sheet.

The information on the sign-in survey sheet will be used as a guide to create graphs and diagrams for a visual representation of the populations that the study has included in the study.

All audio recordings were transcribed and coded independently by the principal investigator, with input from advisors. First a response matrix was created by listing interview questions on the first column and participant identification on the top row. Each of the participants were asked the same questions which established consistency within the interview and also lets each participant to answer the question in a way that reflects their experience as an adoptee or an adoptive parent. The participants may share experiences and opinions about the culture training and about their experiences as a transracial adoptive parent or experiences as a transracial adoptee that are similar to other participants. Shared opinions were categorized into themes. These themes were then used to interpret the feelings and experiences of respondents, parent's perspectives and adoptee perspectives.

Figure 2.

The Ohio State University
Culture Training for Transracial Adoptive Families

Participants Needed!

A research study is being conducted to understand culture within a transracial family through the means of adoption.

1. **Were you adopted into a family of a different race from you?**
2. **Are you 18 years or older?**
3. **Are you willing to share your experiences?**

***If you answered "Yes" to the questions, you may be eligible to participate in a focus group or a one-on-one in-depth interview about your experiences growing up in a transracial family.**

If you are interested, please email Devyn Nan at nan.18@osu.edu

There are incentives for those who participate!

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

Figure 3.

The Ohio State University
Culture Training for Transracial Adoptive Families

Participants Needed!

A research study is being conducted to understand culture within a transracial family through the means of adoption.

Participants are needed for a focus group or one-on-one in-depth interview for discussion of culture within a transracial family through adoption.

In order to participate in this study, you must have the following qualifications:

1. **Have a transracial family through adoption.**
2. **Have been to a culture training in efforts to be culturally competent for adopted child(ren) of different race.**
3. **Be 18 years or older.**
4. **Willing to share your experience to others.**

If you are interested, please email Devyn Nan at nan.18@osu.edu

There are incentives for those who participate!

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

Figure 4.

Culture Training for Transracial Adoptive Families
The Ohio State University – Columbus

Sign In Survey

Thank you for your participation in this study. You are helping to understand racial/ethnic experiences of transracial families and the types of trainings that may improve these experiences.

Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire before the focus group or in-depth interview. If you do not feel comfortable answering the questions, please write N/A (for No Answer or Not Applicable) on the corresponding line.

1. Age _____

2. Your Race
   _____

3. PARENTS ONLY: Race of Adopted Child(ren)
   _____

4. YOUTH ONLY: Race of Adopted Parent(s)

   _____

5. Year of Adoption _____

6. Please circle one that pertains to your adoption process

   Foster Care Adoption International Adoption Independent Adoption

   Other_____

Results

Results for Adoptees

Adoptee Population

Ten adoptees who were adopted into families of a different race have expressed interest in participating in the study. Of these 6 completed one-on-one interviews, and 4 participated in a focus group. Adoptees ranged in age from 18 to 25 years (Figure 5) and adoptions were finalized between 1994 to 2001 (Figure 6). Seven participants identified as Asian, 1 Guatemalan, 1 Indian, and 1of mixed race (Figure 7). The majority (8) of adoptees were adopted internationally, 1 independent adoption, and 1 other (In-Vitro Fertilization) (Figure 8). The participants were asked to identify the race of their parents. 95% of the parents were identified as white and 5% were identified as Asian (Figure 9).

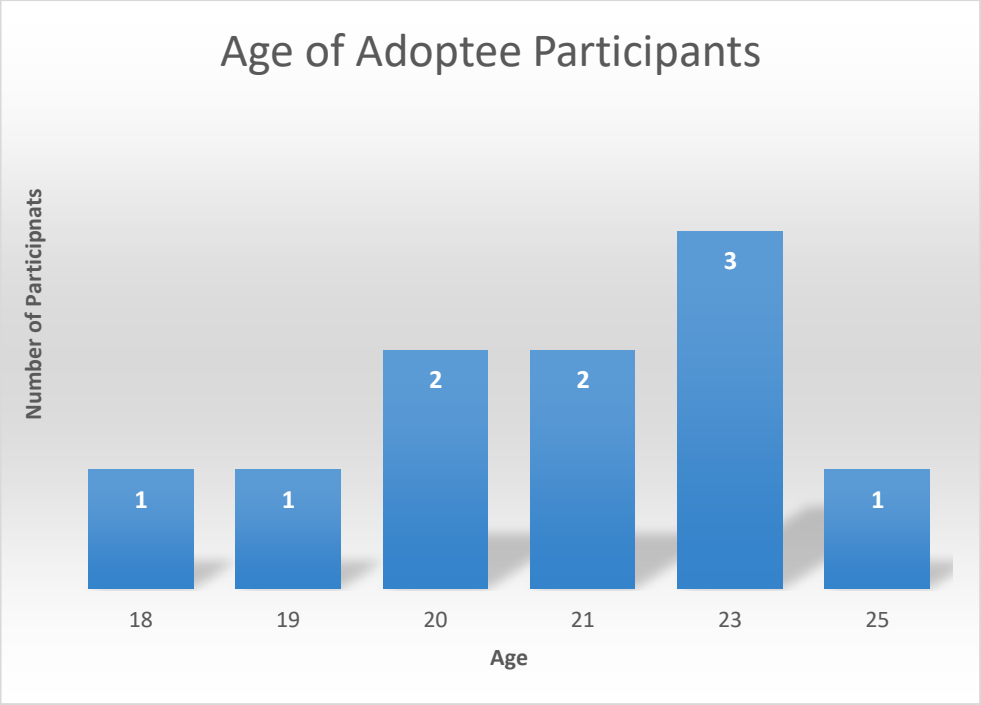
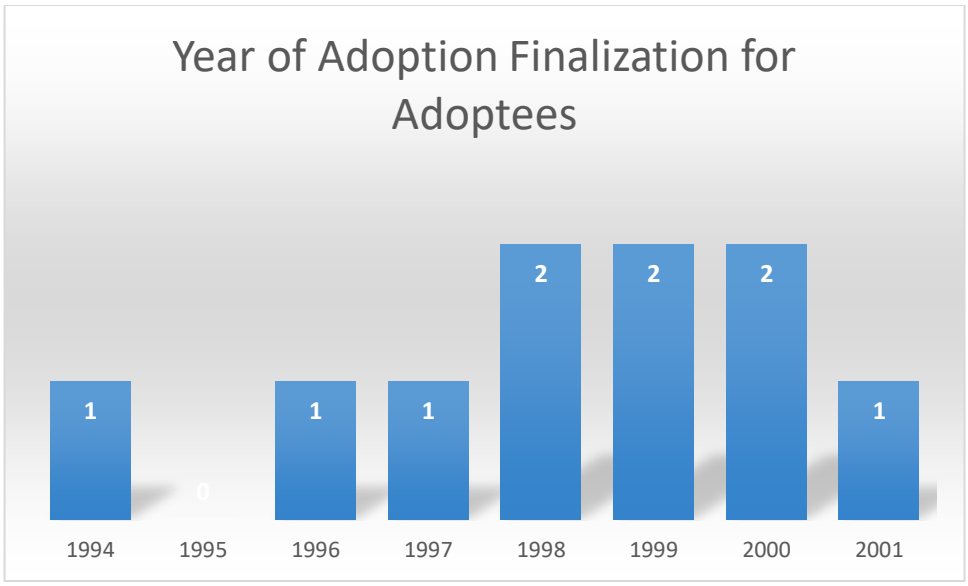


Figure 5.



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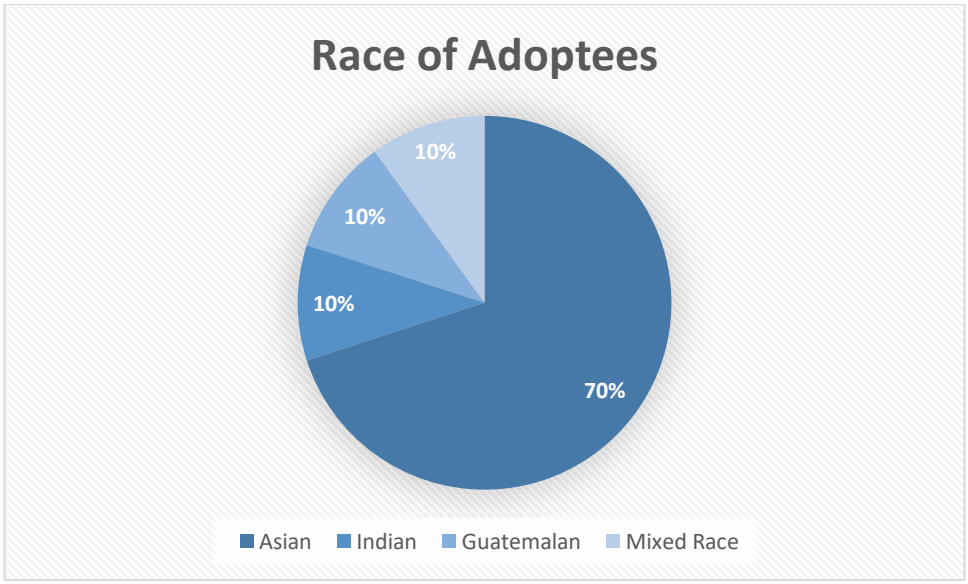

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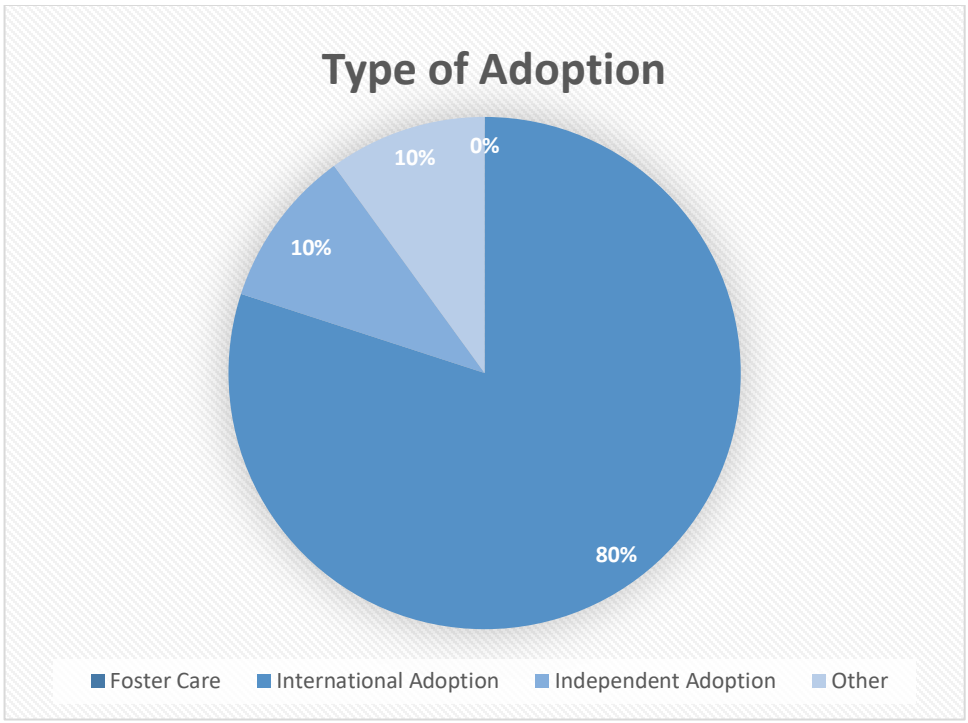

Figure 8.

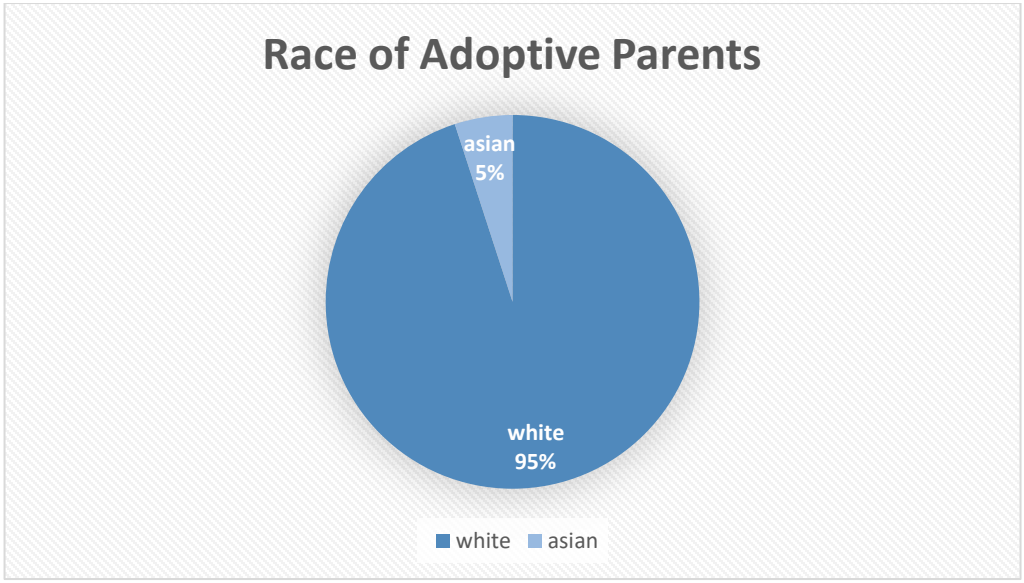

Figure 9.

Figure 10: Adoptee Participants and Their Identifications

	Adoptee A	Adoptee B	Adoptee C	Adoptee D	Adoptee E	Adoptee F	Adoptee G	Adoptee H	Adoptee I	Adoptee J
Race	Chinese	Indian	Chinese	Korean	Chinese	Guatemalan	Chinese	Chinese	Korean	Mixed
Preferred Pronouns	She/Her/Hers	He/Him/His	She/Her/Hers	She/Her/Hers	She/Her/Hers	He/him/his	She/Her/Hers	She/Her/Hers	He/Him/His	She/Her/Hers
Parent 1 Race	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
Parent 2 Race	Portuguese	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
Type of Adoption	International	Domestic (in-vitro)	International	International	International	International	International	International	International	Domestic
Year of Adoption	1997	2000	2001	1996	2000	1999	1999	1998	1994	1998
Age	23	18	19	23	20	20	21	23	25	21
Family	Family of five: mother and father, three children. Oldest of three, siblings are adopted from China as well. Father has three biological kids in a previous marriage.	Family of five: mother and father, three children. Oldest is adopted through foster care, two youngest are twins and brought into the family by in-vitro fertilization using donor eggs. Twins are different races; one is Indian (the interview adoptee) and the other is white. Twin is of a different egg donor who is of a different race.	Family of five: mother and father, three children. Oldest is half sibling of adoptee, the adoptee, and a younger biological child of parents.	Family of Four: mother and father, adopted older sibling, also from Korea, and adoptee.	Family of three: mother and father, adoptee. Father's third marriage. Adoptee has three half siblings from father's previous marriages.	Family of three: mother and mother, adoptee.	Family of four: mother and father, adoptee and younger adopted sister.	Family of five: mother and father, two biological older siblings, and adoptee.	Family of three: mother and father, and adoptee. Mother passed away a couple of years ago, it is just father and adoptee.	Family of seven: mother and father, five children. Two oldest children are biologically related to parents, adoptee, two youngest are adopted.

Definitions and Misconceptions

Adoptees were asked to define transracial adoption in their own words.

The adoptees in the focus group shared that it was difficult for them to define their own adoption because they were not taught how to identify their status. Adoptee G said she wanted to have *"…the right vocabulary to know that they are not trying to be of a different race but adopted by a different race…*". While other adoptees struggled with how to define their identity. Adoptee F knew what transracial meant but did not know that he could *"claim transracial as [my] own"* identity. Adoptee I states that he is still trying to grasp what transracial means to him; the term doesn't resonate with the adoptee in order to officially label himself as transracial. Adoptee A states that the experience of being transracially adopted is continuous and "*…is a continuous learning experience*". With this in mind, Adoptee G said that it is a process to learn, understand and adopt a term that defines who you are. Being a transracial adoptee is *"…a unique experience and is an experience that [you] cannot understand unless it is part of their life",* says Adoptee D.

According to adoptees, there are many misconceptions about transracial adoptions. The most common misconception about adoption is the "savior complex", in other words, it is believed that the adoptees were saved from a life of poverty and disadvantaged lives. Although some adoptee's birth families (in general) do come from a poor family, it is not every adoptee's story. Adoptee C said *"…there is a negative connotation to the meaning of adoption because of the misconception that adoption is secretive and bad…".*

Another common misconception is that adoptees is not truly part of the adoptive family. Transracial adoptees know that they look different from their family, but it does not mean that they are not part of the family. Some adoptees shared that they get asked questions regarding

what they remember from their adoption, if they can speak the respective language, or that the adoptee wants to talk about their adoption to people. All of the adoptees were adopted at a young age and do not remember their adoption, nevertheless, know how the speak the language.

The interviews revealed four major themes, (1) Decreasing cultural integration over time, (2) the importance of open, honest conversations without expectations, (3) the need for parents to acknowledge the different racial/ethnic realities of adoptees, and (4) peer support

Decreasing Cultural Integration Over Time

Adoptees were asked to describe their family culture, which in this context asks how the family integrated or did not integrate the birth culture of the adoptee with the parent's birth cultures. "What holidays did your family celebrate?", "What traditions does your family partake in?", and "Did your parents integrate your birth culture into your childhood? And if yes, "how did they integrate it?" were some questions that were asked to the adoptees. All ten adoptee participants shared a common theme within their family culture. The majority of the adoptees stated that they remember having more cultural integration when they were younger than they do now with their parents.

Adoptee A's family had them go to a cultural school when she was younger, and now the adoptee continues to participate with the school.

> *"I grew up in Ohio and was a part of the COFCC Central Ohio Families Children of China, it's a nonprofit org that like connects everybody, they have culture lessons and classes and things I like grew up doing that I like still work with them sometimes...my parents, well my mom thought it was*

really important for me to know about my birth country so I grew up learning Chinese and then like I end up like having an interest in it so I pursued it further so I started like learning it seriously like middle school high school and then I majored in it in college and now I am teaching it"

Adoptee D states that her family traveled to her birth country.

"…my family went to Korea…I was about thirteen-years old when we went…it was through the adoption agencies in Korea we relinked with an Eastern Child Welfare like tour kind of thing with adoptive families. It was my family, my friend's family and then some other random family. So, we traveled all around…"

Adoptee C and I both had a space in their childhood home dedicated to their birth culture. Adoptee C:

"We have a cabinet in our living room of stuff that they brought back from China and pictures of me when I was little. There's pictures of me, my mom used to dress me up when I was little, in these very like Chinese outfits."

Other adoptees did small traditions as children relating to their birth culture with their families, Adoptee I:

"When I was one, we did the celebration thing where you pick like a gift that is supposed to symbolize what your future is going to be. So, I got dressed up in the [traditional wear]. We did more Korean stuff when I was little, and then I did Tae Kwon Do for six or eight years…and it was because it was something that I was actually good at it, like I was flexible and had an interest in it."

In comparison, Adoptee E has a small continuous tradition with her family.

> *"My mom does the dollar in the window thing that is supposed to bring good luck, which I think is pretty cool, but that is pretty basic celebration, it's just like wearing green on St. Patrick's Day…I just think it's something [my parents] learned about and thought it was cool."*

On the other hand, although Adoptee H wanted to know more about her birth culture, she had little integration of the birth culture.

> *"Somehow we met this guy, who owned a restaurant, it is really the only thing that I remember that is related to China, he opened his restaurant and threw this like Chinese New Year thing for these random adopted kids…we were all there wearing our little Chinese clothes and we had like goody bags with Chinese stuff in them. I think it was all the owner who had set it up…I don't remember how old I was, but I was really really young. After that, I don't really remember my parents trying to let me have any relation with my culture…I wanted to have some relation with my culture but I didn't know how to express that so for some reason I went back to this guy's restaurant for the next ten years of my life…it was the closest thing I could get to China…"*

The adoptees familial culture ranged from integrating themselves into the culture and continuing the celebrate by participating in cultural activities today, to adoptees eating at a restaurant that cooks the traditional food. When asking adoptees about cultural integration, most of them started off by saying "when I was younger", which entails that there was more cultural

integration at a younger age, than they do now. Adoptee I spoke about his present cultural integration,

> *"I think we did more Korean stuff when I was little…but [now] at home it is more about identifying as Irish-Catholic and like a big box of photos of my mom's family, who is German, so it's fun to like go through that and when the World Cup is on, I root for Germany as well.".*

Importance of Open, Honest Conversations Without Expectations

Adoptees had many things to suggest to parents in order to effectively talk about race with their transracially adopted child. Adoptees emphasized being open, be willing to learn, and to not hold expectations of the child regarding their involvement with their birth culture. As adoptee D said, "… *there's a lot of things that parent's say that they don't think affects kids, but they do…*".

Adoptee A talked about why having open conversations are important to adoptee:

> *"…there are going to be questions, like your kids are going to have questions, it's inevitable, it's not something you can control as a parent so the best you can do is be there for them and be willing to talk about it. Otherwise, you are going to inflict more trauma…I have friends whose parents are like 'oh you are American now, why do you want to talk about your adoption?', like I have a friend who loves her parents but really she hates her parents because they would almost make her feel guilty when she tried to talk about her adoption…when you put that into someone's mind, especially little kids, you teach them that there's something wrong with [being adopted]…"*

Adoptee F agreed:

> *"When I bring [my heritage] up, they seem generally receptive of it, um, but when I guess I have talked to them about my birth name, or name given to me at birth, that is seen as a point of contention almost, when I ask them questions more like that, they don't seem to have the capacity to handle that. The conversation close pretty quickly with them, trying to divert attention away from that …"*

Adoptee C had open conversations about her birth culture:

> *"I would say that my parents did a pretty good job, they embraced [the adoption] but never made a huge deal out of it...but like to teach your kids that it is something to embrace and take pride in…"*

As Adoptee A further shared that she attended cultural school as a kid, along with her adopted brother and adopted sister.

> *"No [my siblings are not as involved as I am and was], my sister can speak pretty well. So, me and my sister can speak…but my little brother is not learning Chinese anymore; I don't know if he remembers any of it. He used to take lessons [at the culture school], like all three of us used to take lessons, and then he got more interested in sports, so he didn't have time."*

Adoptees also shared that parents should not assume that their adopted children want to learn about their birth cultures, nor should they expect that adoptees do not have the desire to learn about their culture. Adoptee C shared that adoptees themselves may not have a desire to learn about their birth cultures:

> *"The reason why my parents didn't put in the effort to incorporate Chinese culture cause like I was really like self-conscious about it. I, like, just wanted to fit in and like that's why representation in me isn't such a big thing for me because like growing up, I only saw Chinese people in magazines or shows and stuff like that. I grew up surrounded by a bunch of white people."*

Adoptee F further elaborated this perspective,

> *"I never really celebrated my heritage before, or like my Guatemalan heritage before, that's something that I am not particularly exploring with my parents, that's something I would want to do on my own time, but not necessarily with them, not because I think they would perceive it negatively and they haven't tried to deny any part of me, but it hasn't been particularly encouraged."*

Acknowledge Different Racial/Ethnic Realities of Adoptees

All ten adoptees reported that they did not believe their parents ever went through a cultural class or training prior to adoption. Adoptees J, C and D specifically said that a cultural training could have been helpful for their parents. Adoptee D says,

> *"I think it would be helpful, honestly it's like…I just don't think the state knows what people need…I think it's definitely helpful especially when kids don't see a lot of other Korean people, or what race it is, in general, I think it would help parents to include it in their lives, so I think it is helpful…"*

Adoptee J:

> *"I think [classes] would have helped, not really with me, I think I turned out okay, but my little brothers both have autism and my mom doesn't know how to go about the race conversation with them…"*

However, Adoptees F, G, H, and I went further to suggested additional ways for parents can prepare themselves to understand the different racial/ethnic realities of adoptees

Adoptee H began the conversation by saying:

> *"My parents do not have any Chinese friends, to date, I am the Chinese friend…I wish they had [known other Chinese people], it would help me feel better to know that when they adopted me, they did it because they knew someone who was Chinese and they tried to understand the culture more or even second generation Chinese, anything really, but the fact that they didn't, and the fact that they didn't go to culture classes makes me question why China, and you don't want to think that your parents adopted you because that was in the magazines…"*

Adoptees F, G, and H came to the conclusion that culture training prior to adoption may not be necessary in raising a transracial adoptee, but ongoing education after adoption, especially about the problems that transracial adoptees face throughout their lifetime may be best.

One way that parents can continue cultural education is by reading books written by transracial adoptees, and that talk about race and ethnicity (and other isms that are in relation). Adoptees, especially at older ages, turn to books written by and about transracial adoptees for more insight. Reading books is one way that parents can learn to talk about race, culture, and relating topics. Adoptee G found many books that were about adoption, transracial adoption, and

even books by transracial adoptees; for example, Jane Trenka's *The Language of Blood* was mentioned. Adoptee E had read aloud Rachel Rostad's dialogue called *Names*.

Across the board, adoptees expressed that they wish their parents knew more about talking about race and ethnicity, especially as adoptees enter adolescence and adulthood. Adoptee G:

> *"I wanted to go to a Black Lives Matter protest in high school, and my mom was like 'No, I don't think that's a good idea', because I was planning to just go alone, so she was worried that as a small Asian girl, it wasn't the safest place to be, especially because [the movement] had just started and my mom didn't really know about the safety for any person of color at these events, but my dad slipped up and said 'oh she is white enough', and I never seen my mom snap faster at him. So that perception of them, I realized that my mom never not acknowledges that race plays a part in it…but the fact that my mom shut it down as fast as it happened, played an important part because it showed me that she constantly understood it…"*

Adoptee G added:

> *"The bare minimum should be that [parents] understand that race matters, and not the way that parents are told before that color blind raising kids, because that doesn't work…baseline [parents] should understand structural oppression…a lot of adopting parents want to give their adopted child [material wealth] but that doesn't mean they will have the greatest relationship with them if they are constantly being racist toward their child, even if they don't know."*

Adoptee F:

> *"I definitely feel like a class would draw upon like both examining structural issues but also ways to navigate interpersonal, I guess like, interactions. One that goes back to the idea that 'why am I adopting? Am I seeing this through the lens of saving people or like going through a lens of alleviating people from a situation', so like examining ways how western ideas influence what we see as a good life, but then also ways in which [parents] can stand as an ally to your child, being intentional with the words that you are using."*

These two adoptees want future adoptive parents to recognize the importance of talking about racism and oppression with their adopted child; which is how Adoptee B's parents approached the conversation. Adoptee B experiences how his parents focused on talking about the importance to embrace their differences,

> *"I have a [white] twin sister, so whenever [my mom] would sit us down to have talks, it would be like to both of us. It wouldn't be isolating. Like she said, if anyone says something bad about you or to you, of anything that you have no innate control over, like your skin tone or your body, you can't let that happen. Don't let anyone not hear about it, make sure it doesn't happen."* (Adoptee B says that his sister is considered underweight so the talks were to address this as well as race).

Adoptee B further elaborated the difference between parents educating themselves and teaching their children about their birth cultures.

> *"My parents have tried to introduce me [to Indian culture] …but I think it is kind of difficult because if someone who is white tries to even talk*

about that kind of culture, there is a lot of like people who look down on that. Like parents want to be inclusive of other cultures but at the same time it is so difficult, like the grasp of how things are meant to be…there's a lot of worries about cultural appropriation."

Adoptee B explained further that parents should be cautious when reading about culture for the purpose of teaching their transracially adopted child.

"…at a young age, for them to expose me to [Indian culture], they would have to expose themselves, and you know that's like really hard to put in the perspective of others. Because I mean like, if [the parent] is reading online, or reading books to try and learn about these other groups, you are really not, you are not giving them that culture, you are just trying to explain what other people do…When it comes to holidays and stuff, they don't really have to celebrate things like that, they can tell me all that they want but if they don't truly believe in those ideals then…it isn't genuine from them."

Adoptee D:

"I feel like the experience [of being a transracial adoptee] is something that people can't really understand unless it is your life. I think it is a unique experience…in comparison to domestic like white parents adopting a white kid, it's similar to domestic adoption in the sense that…when white parents adopt a black baby, there are certain things they have to learn, there are certain things they have to accommodate."

Peer Support

More than half of the adoptees had a community of other adoptees that they could talk to and use as a support system.

Adoptee C:

> *"We [the adoptees from the same adoption group] met up this summer, so there's seven, or six of us, in total, and we haven't seen each other since we were little, since we were like babies. So, we were basically strangers, but we are all scattered through Ohio, and one of them lives in D.C. A couple of years ago, one of them like found all of our Instagrams and made a group chat and we started talking. So, we have this group chat that we talk every now and then and we finally got back together this summer…we all got along so well and it's like we have known each other the whole time and we were all excited. And we got made in China tattoos…"*

This adoptee was adopted with other babies when her parents adopted her. The adoption group refers to the other individuals that were adopted. Others found support in cultural classes or school.

Adoptee E:

> *"One of my friends from elementary and middle school, she was Chinese, and her mom and her came from China to move where I live, and then they started a little cultural class for a bunch of adopted Asians in my area, which was really cool and it was interesting to see all that…"*

Four of the participants within this study were part of a student organization Transracial Adoptees of Ohio State.

Adoptee H,

"…I wanted to [create the club] because I wanted people to have a resource that I never had because before that I wasn't very involved diversity-wise…and also because I need it as a transracial adoptee."

Results for Parents

Parents Population

There were three parents that had offered their perspective for this study. All of the parents were adoptive mothers, and all identified as White and were between the ages 37 and 58. Two of three adoptive mothers had partners that were of a different race as the adopted child. All three adoptive mothers had 1 to 2 adopted children of a different race, and only one parent had biological children. Between the three mothers, the adopted children were adopted between the years 2015 and 2019 and had all been adopted through independent adoption agencies. All adoptions were domestic adoptions into the families; one parent's adopted child was adopted domestically to them but had previously been adopted internationally into another family. Two of the three parents had children identifies as African American and the third parent has a child of Ethiopian descent. Figure 11 lays out the above information and correlates each parent participants with an identity name to be referred to throughout the study.

Figure 11: Parent Participants and Their Identifications.

	Parent A	Parent B	Parent C
Race	White	White	White
Partner's Race	-	White	Filipino
Child's Race	African American	African American	Ethiopian
Age	58	38	37
Preferred Pronouns	She/Her/Hers	She/Her/Hers	She/Her/Hers

Adoption Year	2016 and 2018	2019	2015 and 2019
Adoption Type	Independent; domestic	Independent; domestic	Independent; domestic
Family	Family of three; Single mother, two African American daughters (not biologically related to each other). Two-year age difference between the two girls.	Family of six; Mother and father, three biological children and one African American son.	Family of four; Mother and father, one Ethiopian son and one Mexican American daughter.

During parent interviews, there were four emerging themes (three of which compare to the themes seen with adoptee interviews), (1) Defining Culture, (2) Preparing for Transracial Adoption, (3) Approaches to Conversation About Race, and (4) Ensuring Inclusivity.

Defining Culture

Adoptive parents were first asked to define culture in their own words. Based on the parents' experiences, they all have come to similar definition of culture, all while sharing how their experiences have shaped their meaning of culture.

Parent A begins by saying,

> *"I see culture as like everything around a person's life, so the language, the clothing , the social norms, the music that is listened to, the family traditions like all of those things make up that culture…[researcher asks where they came to find this definition]…growing up and like understanding that other people had different cultures than my own, whether that was a religious culture or a country club culture and also just different styles of living and*

different influencers…I was never really aware of the term culture until I was in college…[learning about culture] is ongoing…"

Parent B:

"To adopt a baby of a different culture to us means that we are opening our eyes to other experiences that are not necessarily ours so um and it means a lot, it helps in my immediate family to teach my children about empathy and understanding that people do things differently and they look differently and why they do that and really just culture is a constant conversation in our home."

And Parent C's definition of culture:

"Culture means understanding where people come from and how their background and environment experiences say who they are…my [partner] is Filipino so culture is very important in our family besides adopting, my [partner] does things that are different from a typical American. So, we were very culturally aware before we even adopted…"

All three parents were able to recognize and acknowledge the racial/ethnic differences within their family. All three parents did go through some type of training pre-adoption during which they discussed culture and shared perspectives of transracial adoption. Parent A describes her experience,

"My adoption agency was really hardcore encouraged us to transracial adoption and they were very clear about the challenges, um , with identity and making sure that you showed your child racial mirrors and a whole host of other things and you couldn't necessarily raise your child who doesn't

> *look like you in a community that looks entirely like you…they made us watch this documentary…that was a bunch of transracial adoptees who were adults that were being interviewed and talking about their experiences…they didn't necessarily gives us a 'Here's how to raise a child that doesn't look like you' but they underscored the importance that you can't be colorblind."*

Colorblindness is the idea that all people and their experiences are the same, regardless of race/ethnicity. If adoptive parents believe that they are colorblind, then they are teaching them that racism and discrimination do not exist, when in fact, it is very real and prevalent in society. Parent B mentions colorblindness in her own experience,

> *"I went through training and I thought it was very very helpful, but I just don't think a lot of [parents] do and I think it is because the social worker who did my home study didn't want us to adopt across races, she was discouraging it but she said 'I really want you to take this training to see if you are ready to adopt a child of another race', and um, what the training really showed me was that we didn't really have the resources available to adopt a baby of another race…so now I have that awareness how not to ignore their culture and not to say 'we are all the same', because we are not."*

Parent C shares more detail about how her and her husband participated in their training,

> *"We took classes, which was part of our training, to be culturally aware…I can't say that I am an expert in culture but I definitely take it into consideration now…we did a lot of seminars but we did round table*

> *discussion with other potential adoptive families and one of our first discussions was about open vs closed adoptions…and then it went on to culture and how we would, I think we had to put in our adoption plan how we would be accommodating to a child of a different culture and how we would make sure that their culture was considered sacred and important throughout their lives."*

Lifelong Learning Approach

Continuity is an underlying theme between all three parents regarding how they approach conversations about race with their family. The parents state that they are continuously having conversations with their partners and families about race and how it looks in their family unit. The parents also mentioned how they are continuously learning about their adopted child's culture so that they can be more educated as well as being prepared for conversations with their family. Parent A begins by saying,

> *"I just think we are lifelong learners, so um, of course I want to learn tons of things, having new friends can teach you knew things, traveling you learn different things, reading a book you learn different things…we constantly have that [race] conversation, all the time. I think we started with music and saying like 'oh hey, you know who this singer is?'…and then eventually weave in like 'oh this person has brown skin like you do'…the other thing is that you have to do it according to how developmentally they are. So, it started off with brown skin and then with my oldest, as time went on, I knew that I needed to make sure that she understood that there are lots of*

different kinds of brown skin and that there are different cultures that go with those different brown skins, so now she understands that she is black."

Parent B's adopted child is only several months old but has older children that she talks with about culture and how it looks in their family.

"…for my older kids, again my [child] is a baby right now, so I don't imagine it will be much different because we are setting the stage now and we will continue to do this for him as he grows, but I had just tucked my eight-year-old in bed and he was reading a Black History book, like we have so many books with black children in it, and really all races, so we have a heavy focus on Black History and understanding the black culture…"

As Parent B setting the stage to talk about culture and race at an early age, Parent C started talking with her child in middle childhood because they adopted when the child was 10 years-old, The family does more cultural activities together in order to continue embracing the different cultures in their home.

"My son is now a teenager and he has learned to cook a few dishes of Ethiopian culture and so have we, so we have set aside some time to do that, and so we cook and giving opportunities to be around other people like him, and we have gone to Ethiopian restaurants, gotten him a flag and same with my husband like he cook Filipino food all the time…"

All parent participants agreed they must continuously think and talk about the culture that is in their family and how they can give their children the cultural opportunities that can help define who that child is.

Ensuring Inclusivity

Throughout the interviews, parents described how they ensure inclusivity of the birth cultures, and all cultures, in their family. Parents share that they rely on the community to obtain advice and suggestions for their child and their family. Parent A begins by saying,

> *"I worry about it all the time, but parents worry all the time. But I worry all the time about ratios in a class, are there any black kids there? Is there a black teacher? I mean, so my youngest daughter is in daycare and there are two daycares that are exactly alike, and they said 'oh you can do either one' and I was like 'nope, there's a black teacher over there, she is going over there', so I am always aware of it, always worried about it. Like, are they seeing enough black people, do we have enough black friends, and I don't mean like 'oh I know so and so from work', no, like actual friends…'where should we move?' what schools are going to be best for my daughters?'…I need my kids to see people who look like them and have that experience…"*

Parent B has similar experiences and concerns,

> *"I am actively seeking, in certain restaurants I'm looking to see if there are other black people are there, 'oh there are, good we will come back'…so I am actively seeking it…I do feel like when I see people that are black in my community, I smile at them and if they have kids, I want to give them my business card, so that our families can hang out. So, it is something that I actively seek..."*

Parents also shared that they look to services out of their immediate community to find a service that obtains particularly for their child. Parent C has a family friend that she turns to for help,

> *"...I have a good friend, back in South Dakota where we used to live, that has two children adopted from Ethiopia, herself. So, um, asking questions about culture, about why is this certain thing, this behavior just a teenager behavior or is it cultural, or like [child's name] wants his hair a certain way so she told me where to get this sponge off of online, so just talking to other people. I am part of a lot of Facebook communities that talk about hair, so yeah just use other mommas as resources…"*

Parent B says this,

> *"...as [child's name] gets older, I may drive a few towns over to take him to a music class or something, I may look into a different camp to send [child's name] to than what my other children go to..."*

Parent A brings their children to a West African Dance class as one way to include them in their culture, "*my daughter takes a West African dance class and I am the only white person there, and we will talk about it like 'oh is it weird that your mother sticks out'...*". Parent B's family has an open adoption with the child's birth mother but does not use her as a resource,

> *"I actually don't [go to birth mother for advice], it's actually interesting, all I do is google YouTube videos on how to do his hair or I take him to a black barber like 45 minutes away. But I don't reach out to birth mom for that and I never have because I want her to know that I can take care [child] and I don't need her to tell me, like I got this, like I can figure it out. Like [child's name] has horrible Eczema and sometimes I'm like 'should I ask her?' but then it's no different from going online and googling it…"*

These transracial adoptive parents want future adoptive parents to understand the need for cultural inclusivity and the attention that it needs. Parent A reminds future adoptive parents that they are still children and need the basic necessities, but to remember that understanding race is part of taking care of their needs. Parent B wants future parents to acknowledge the different races within the family and talk with family about how to bring race into the family so that it is well represented. Like Parent A, Parent C reminds parents that they are your own children and to not let race be a reason to not adopt.

Discussion

Transracial Adoptees

This study identified four themes after hearing transracial adoptees' perspectives (1) Definitions and Misconceptions, (2) Decreasing Cultural Integration Over Time, (3) Acknowledging Different Racial/Ethnic Realities of Adoptees and (4) Peer Support.

Defining and addressing misconceptions about transracial adoptions was important for transracial adoptees. Participants wanted people to understand the basics of adoption because they are constantly having to explain to family, friends, peers, and even strangers that what is said about adoption is not always true. There are several studies and webpages that are dedicated to educating the public about adoption misconceptions. For example, many adoption sites will discuss the most believed misconceptions much like the ones that the participants discussed, as well as adopting parents are always wealthy, birth mothers are teenagers, or adoptees will go back to their birth families.

Decreasing Cultural Integration Over Time was another major theme that emerged with adoptees. Although Baden et. al (2012) talk extensively about adoptees going through a

reculturation phrase, most of the interviewed adoptees did not experience this, or to the level that Baden describes. Baden described reculturation as a stage in life that all adoptees go through and expend time and energy towards in order to fully understand who they are. However, when adoptees talked about their experience, reculturation was not a single phase; wanting to know more about their culture happens multiple times throughout their life. During these times, it depends on the individual whether they want to seek further information about their culture. There was only one adoptee that fully went through a reculturation phrase in that she learned the language, traveled to her birth country, celebrates the traditions and holidays, and has a job that is centered around the birth culture. The rest of the adoptees either had some interest in learning more about their birth culture but never sought out more information. Other adoptees do something relating to their birth culture a few times a year. In this study, reculturation did not show as suggested by Baden. This study was able to reinforce the idea that reculturation occurs in transracial adoptees, however, this study did not find that reculturation is a phase. A phase typically suggests that there is a single and significant amount of time geared towards a specific behavior or action. The adoptees who were interviewed suggested that reculturation happens multiple times, for different amounts of time, and at different levels of intensity, suggesting that reculturation in transracial adoptees is more individualized, rather than a general phase as Baden suggests.

Adoptees spoke extensively about parents needing to acknowledge the different racial/ethnic realities of that adoptees face. Adoptees want transracial adoptive parents to be more knowledgeable and more comfortable talking about the racial and ethnic realities that adoptees can experience. The adoptees whose parents were not open to discussion or not open to educating themselves on the importance of culture during their childhood, had stronger feelings

about this theme. For example, an adoptee stated that since their parents weren't open to discussing the adoption or integration of birth culture, that adoptee felt that something went wrong in the adoption, and even felt that something is wrong with themselves. Parents are supposed to be a support system and are even described as a source for comfort, but when parents cannot offer support to their child in a specific way, children can feel a loss of attachment. Loss of attachment can have traumatic outcomes which can explain why these adoptees had somewhat stronger feelings about this theme. Roberson (2006), discusses the many ways in which secure attachment affects adoptees, parents, and the relationship between them. One of the items that Roberson discusses is how parents must recognize the losses or challenges of the adoptee while providing support for the adoptee, which initiates secure attachment (Roberson, 2006).

Peer support is another way that adoptees cope with racial and ethnic realities. Peer support can be described as an individual are supported by other individuals with similar experiences and backgrounds or individuals with knowledge of certain experiences; typically, the group of individuals are around the same age. The adoptees who mentioned having support from their peers are around the same age as the peers. For this population, peer support is different from parental support in that most of the time neither of the parents have been transracially adopted themselves. Some parents who may have grown up in a multiracial family or community may be able to give the adoptee support however, the experience of being transracially adopted is very unique. This leads youth to search for peers with similar experiences. For example, one adoptee was able to find other adoptees within her adoption group and connect with them through social media. Parents may want to keep in contact with other adopting parents so that in

the future, their children can have another source of social and peer support. Parents can also encourage adoptees to use social media in order to reach out to other adoptees.

Brown and Calder (2000) talked with foster parents to understand their needs in order to raise a child of a different race and ethnicity. Within the study, the parents indicated that they needed (1) good working relationships, (2) cultural sensitivity, (3) balanced familial relationships, (4) funding, and (5) parenting skills (Brown and Calder, 2000). These all may be true for the needs of foster parents, however, the study failed to ask if this is going to help the children who are living in these types of homes. Consistent with previous studies (Brown & Calder, 2000) adoptees reported that trainings that include ways to integrate birth culture, understanding racial/ethnic realities of their children and how to have open discussions would be helpful for parents but the adoptees stressed that adults transracial adoptees should be included in these trainings. Adult adoptees have the first-hand experience to decipher what information is actually helpful to raising a child of a different race and ethnicity. In addition to getting the adoptees perspective, there needs to be different types of adoptees lending their voices. For example, transracial international adoptees and transracial domestic adoptees have different experiences and needs. In the study there were nine transracial international adoptees and one transracial domestic adoption. Transracial international adoptions require a child to be removed from a culture that they were born into; they are being removed from the language, the traditional wear, the food, the people, the music and more. For this reason, international transracial adoptees may feel even more loss. Another difference between the two types of transracial adoption is that when asking adoptees to reflect on how their parents talked about culture, transracial international discussed how their parents knew more about the birth culture while the international domestic adoptee wished their parents knew more about the history of the

culture. Based on this, parents should be aware of the differing preparation process for international and domestic adoptions; parents adopting internationally are to focus on culture and race and parents adopting domestically may want to learn about the history of that race in the adopting country.

Transracial Adoptive Parents

Among adoptive parents, the three reoccurring themes were (1) Defining Culture, (2) Lifelong Learning Approach, and (3) Ensuring Inclusivity.

Parents shared how they became more aware of other cultures and how they try to respectfully embrace that culture, knowing that it is not their own. This theme may have emerged because the family unit had to redefine their family culture as they were adopting a child of a different background. All the parents expressed that they made some change to their lives and to their family lives so that they can include the multiple cultures in their home; this then led to a new theme. Parents are continuously learning and finding ways to support their adopted child; before adopting, parents learned how the adoption process works, during the adoption, parents had to learn about culture and the needs of the child, and post adoption, parents are searching for ways to reflect the child's background. This theme was consistently brought up in most of the questions the researcher asked. Parents expressed that they went through training to learn about transracial adoption, searched for resources for their child, provided racial mirrors for their child and continues to look for other opportunities to learn. In addition to learning about culture, parents had to learn ways to ensure inclusivity, which became the final theme. Parents had to make sure that they were not exposing only one culture to the child, and for one parent that included her own biological children. Inclusivity not only relates to their immediate families, but to extended family and friends. All three parents did have a positive attitude towards

incorporating birth culture into their family, and they were comfortable with their children engaging in their birth culture. Parent B explicitly said that she teaches all of her children tools to overcome difficult situations at a young age. As Juffer and Ijzendoorn (2007) stated, individuals will become more independent and have a higher self-esteem when they are taught how to overcome difficult times at an early age. The families have the chance to learn about a different community than their own but because they are trying to learn about another community, they have to actively seek information.

Comparing Adoptees and Adoptive Parents Perspectives

During the interviews, all of the participants in the study were asked to identify misconceptions that are associated with adoption and transracial adoption. The most identified misconception by both adoptees and parents was the idea of the savior complex. As adoptees and parents discussed, the savior complex is the idea that parents want to adopt transracially because they have the chance to save a child from poverty, neglect, or an unprivileged life. Many people have this view of adoption because that is how adoption was framed in history and how it is framed in media. Among this sample, it was not the parent's motivation to adopt a child so that they can save them from an undernourished and unloved life. It was, however, the parents' motivation to love a child that is in need of a home, regardless of race. Not only did the parents involved in the study express this, but the adoptees in the study shared their views on the savior complex as well. Two of the adoptees used the phrase "buying a child" and another adoptee used the phrase "shopping through a magazine" to describe the savior complex. It is believed that the adoptees used these expressions to show what they are hearing about themselves and their families, as well as to underline how hurtful these misconceptions can be. These phrases lead

people to believe that the adopting parents are insensitive to the wellbeing of the child and that there is a belief that people can rightfully buy other people.

Adoptee participants ranged in age from 18 to 25 years, which makes them born between the 1995 and 2001. During the1990s to 2000s, parents and adoption agencies were still identifying what is needed to raise a confident adoptee. As described above, Hague and non-Hague adoptions, States and individual adoption agencies all have different requirements when adopting a child. For example, there are different requirements that parents need to have or accomplish, difference in time spent in birth country, difference in policies and fees. Due to the fact that there were so many differing requirements, there was not a consistent and accurate way to acknowledge what is best for the child when it comes to forming a cultural identity. Now that there is more research about adoption and the long term affects (Smyer et. al, 1998 and Feigelman and Silverman, 1984), more agencies are providing more opportunities for parents to understand adoption.

Findings from this study show that adoptees wish their own parents had learned more about their birth cultures, but more importantly how to talk about race. In comparison, parent participants who adopted between 2015 and 2019 successfully integrated birth culture of their adopted children and reported having frank conversations about race and ethnicity. This may be true because there are more conversations about race and ethnicity in today's society; conversations about what it means to be a person of color and having more cultural representation in everyday life. In conclusion, adoptive parents today may be beginning to recognize what adoptees themselves reported wanting for their upbringing.

Adoptees stressed that proper culture training should be developed and led by transracial adoptees themselves. Today, pre-adoption, culture trainings are typically created by and taught

by social workers and people with training in race and culture. Although social workers and others have the knowledge to talk about race and culture, they themselves may not have had first-hand experiences adopting a child of a different race or have first-hand experience of being a transracial adoptee. Adoptees would be able to create a platform that will help parents and family members learn the skills to talk about race, culture, and answer questions that they may have surrounding transracial adoption. In addition, adoptees can discuss with potential adoptive parents the many challenges that can occur while raising a child of a different race. During the interviews, one participant said that they have separation anxiety because of their adoption, another said that they had depression around the time of their adoption date, and others felt a loss of identity. These are just some examples of the types of challenges that adoptees can go through and what parents should be aware of when parenting an adopted child. These challenges may or may more occur in adoptees, but as the adoptees have expressed, understanding the types of challenges is essential to raising a transracial adoptee. In conclusion, agencies should think about inviting willing adult transracial adoptees into the training program to help social workers and instructors to convey such messages.

Limitations

This study recognizes a few limitations. First, this study included a total of thirteen participants (ten adoptees and three parents). This sample size cannot accurately represent the entirety of the transracial adoptees and transracial adoptive parents in the United States. The adoptee sample profile was extremely limited. All of the advertisement of the study for the adoptee population was conducted on the Ohio State University – Columbus campus. Secondly, this study asked for participants to contact the research team in order to express their interest in participating in the study. People are more likely to agree to participate in this study because they

have strong feelings towards the researched topic. Many of the adoptee participants that participated said that they had a fairly good childhood, which implies that participants may have been willing to talk about their experience, because it was positive. Thirdly, a pandemic occurred during the time of data collection. The adoptee interviews occurred before the outbreak of the COVID-19 outbreak, but the parent interviews were affected. Although the research team contacted several interested parents, the team did not get responses back from the interested parents nor did parents follow through with an interview. This may be affected both the number and demographic profile of participants.

Strengths

This study recognizes several strengths. First, the data was gathered by in-depth interviews and focus groups; this enables participants to go into detail about their experiences and to further explain what it means to be in a transracial family through adoption. Adoptees and parents were asked questions to help guide thinking and information wanted for the study, but the participants were allowed to speak on behalf of any experiences they may have had being in a transracial family. Secondly, this study includes perspectives from both adoptees and parents of transracial adoptive families. By talking to both populations, the study was able to understand two different perspectives of a transracial family. It is important to hear the voices of both perspectives because they have different experiences. Third, there were multiple means of participating in the study. Participants were able to do a one-on-one in-person interview, a one-on-one video conference interview, or through a focus group. Initially, the study only had adoptees and parents participate through in-person interviews; later, the study added an amendment in order to improve participation.

Implications

Despite the small sample sizes, there were several important implications that emerged. Findings suggest that there is a need for transracial adoptive parents to better understand the challenges that race, and ethnicity can bring, likewise, there is a need for basic communication skills for parents and children. The adoptees expressed suggestions and even gave examples on how parents can achieve these goals, including reading books and talking with adult transracial adoptees were of those suggestions (Table 3). Parent participants showed that parents are more aware of what is necessary for raising children of a different race. However, they still struggle to find resources for their children.

Based on the findings, adoption agencies and social workers can aid transracial adoptive families raise children of a different race. Agencies should develop culturally specific resource guides for transracial adoptive families. Recommended social media groups or accounts, local hairdresser, summer camps, cultural schools, and recommended books are all examples that can be included in the resource guide to help parents find support and services. Social workers and adoption agency workers can ensure the child's wellbeing by asking potential parent's their views on culture to see if they can give the child the opportunity to be culturally involved and culturally aware of the different races within the family. As one of the parents said, their social worker recommended going through a training before taking further adoption actions. These statements may raise some questions; Can the state make culture training mandatory for potential adoptive parents? Should it be mandatory? Who should be in charge of ensuring parents are taking the needed training before adoption? Can a program be made for parents to link with adult adoptees? More research and more perspectives will be needed in order for these questions to be answered. The table below shows how each part of the community can assist transracial adoptive families.

Table 3

Target Audience	Ways to Help Transracial Adoptive Families
Parents	Before adopting, talk with an adult adoptee; make sure that you understand the challenges that can occur while raising a child of a different color. Talking with an adult adoptee can give perspective to how a child should be supported in a transracial family. If there are no willing adult adoptees to talk to, read. Read books that are already out there by transracial adoptees. Join social media groups that can give tips and tricks.
Adult Adoptees	If willing, give perspective to transracial adoptive families. Help them understand what helped you grow and notify them of things that parents should be aware of.
Adoption Agencies	Consider inviting adult transracial adoptees for perspective during training. They can offer first-hand experience for adopting parents. In addition, create a resource guide for adopting parents; guides specifically for each race and ethnic background. The resources can include highly recommended schools, neighborhoods, cultural classes, hair stylists, and more.
Community	Create groups and programs that promote diversity and inclusion. Not only will this help educate the general public about diversity, it can be a helpful resource for racially mixed families. Within this study, adoptees have said that they would have been more interested in learning about their culture if there was a resource for them to learn from.
General Public	If you see a family raising a child sharing your race/ethnicity, stop and ask if they need any assistance. From the interviewed parents, they are always seeking opportunities for their child, but may need help getting in the right direction. Having someone of the same race/ethnicity of their child will give parents support and the child will see people like themselves.

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Appendix A

1. Describe your family.
2. Define Culture.
3. Who or what would you turn to for a culture/ethnic/race question?
4. Knowing that you will adopt, did you have any concerns about a transracial adoption?
5. How did your partner/family feel about adopting a child of another race?
6. Did you take training for your adoption? If yes, explain some of the topics that were discussed.
7. During the training, what was helpful for you to know as a future transracial adoptive parent?
8. After the training, did you feel that you had the tools to raise a child of a different race?
9. As a parent now, did you feel that the training has prepared you?
10. Have you begun to have cultural/racial conversations with your child? If yes, what do those conversations look like.
11. If you could give advice for future transracial adoptive parents, what would it be?
12. What are things that you would want the general public to know about transracial adoption?
13. Any other thoughts/experiences that you want to offer to the study?

Appendix B

1. Describe your family.
2. Describe your relationship with your family members.
3. Does your family incorporate your culture? If yes, to what extent?
4. What does it mean to you to be transracially adopted?
5. To your knowledge, did your parents take any training relating to transracial adoption?
6. Do you have any opinions about parents taking training relating to transracial adoption?
7. Are there any misconceptions that society believes about adoption and/or transracial adoption?
8. Knowing what you know now about your adoption, what advice would you give yourself when you were younger, or what advice would you give another transracial adoptee?
9. What advice would you give future transracial adoptive parents?
10. Any other thoughts/experiences that you want to offer to the study?